SECESSION

NUMBER ONE

VIENNA
TWENTY CENTS

DIRECTOR: GORHAM B. MUNSON
Temporary editorial office: Hotel Zenit, Vienna, Austria
Business office: Peter K. Hurwitz, Treasurer, 1361 - 46 Street, Brooklyn, New York
Address all correspondence, editorial and business, to Peter K. Hurwitz, Treasurer, 1361 - 46 Street, Brooklyn, New York

IDENTITY CARDS

Louis Aragon: A youthful student of medicine who served in the war. Poet, novelist, critic, co-director of *Littérateur* and associate editor of *Aventure*, the two organs of the youngest French generation in letters.

Will Bray: He has covered at prodigious speed an enormous amount of literary territory during his nineteen years. He has lived alternately in America and in France and writes in both languages.

Malcolm Cowley: A contributor of poetry and essays to a number of publications, including the *Dial*, the *Little Review*, the N. Y. Evening Post *Literary Review*. He graduated from Harvard not long ago and is living in Montpellier, France, at present.

Matthew Josephson: A recent graduate of Columbia University and a resident of Paris. He has been published by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Lately, he joined the staff of *Aventure*. A helpful counselor at the meetings in Paris which planned *Secession*.

Tristan Tzara: His cry, „Dada", has travelled around the world from the Café Voltaire, Zurich in 1916. A Roumanian who writes in French. He is author of *La Première Aventure Céléste de Mr Antipyrine*, *Vingt-Cinq Poèmes* and *Çalendrier cinéma du coeur abstrait*.

PRICE OF THIS NUMBER

20 cents in America 2 francs 50 in France 1 shilling in England
Subscriptions, $ 1.00, 12 francs, or 5 shillings for six numbers

NUMBER ONE SPRING 1922

DAY COACH

I

Tickets PLEASE.
said the conductor, and Benjamin settled back
into his seat, and by this action wrapped
solitude about him like a cloak.

Strangers brushed past him
down the aisle, soiling only
the fringes of his mantel;
his eyes had turned
to watch the hills that so proceeded like awkward
vast dancers across his eyes;
to watch the moving
mist of his breath as it crept along the pane.

II

He says to himself
— it is the placing
of the foot upon the step deposited by the porter;
it is the leisurely
procession with baggage up a red plush aisle:
out of such gestures there grows
the act of travel.

Johnstown, Pittsburgh: these cities
escape the grasp of the hand
these cities are pimpled on hills;
Manhattan is corseted briefly about with waters.
You climb into a train, give a tip, open a paper, light a
cigar, and the landscape
jerks unevenly past.

Your knees straighten
automatically at Pittsburgh; a porter
takes the luggage, saying rapidly
— this way to a taxi, Boss,
this way to a taxi,
and the hills and fields of Pennsylvania quiver
behind you vaguely, the landscape of a dream.

III

As the other train passed he looked through the plate glass of the dining car — the other — and saw a fork suspended in the air and before it had finished its journey he was peering into a smoking car with a silver haze and four men playing cards over a suitcase clamped to their knees. A world, a veritable world, as seen beneath the microscope. A world in an envelope sealed with the red tail light that proceeded gravely past him up the track. A world sealed out of his world and living for thirty-five seconds of his life.

IV

The lights of the train proceed
transversely across the water;
across the water strides
the shadow of the engineer;
the square barred windows move across the water
as if they marked a prison that exists
never between four walls, but only moves
continually across a world of waters.

V

His head drooped lower gradually; he dreamed
of the locomotive that boldly had deserted
the comfortable assurance of steel rails;
it turned and leaped
like a beast hunted along the wooded slope.
BMMMP
over logs, over stones and among
the trees that leaned away from it as it passed,
and all the time the engineer bending out of his cab
and saying
— The four fourteen will be on time at Youngsville
the four fourteen will be on time WON'T it, Bill.

And the trees, reassured, lean back to their posts again.

VI

Time is marked not by hours but by cities; we are one station before Altoona, one station beyond Altoona;

CRESSON: change cars for Luckett, Munster and all points on the line that runs tortuously back into a boyhood, with the burden of a day dropping like ripe fruit at every revolution of the driving wheel, with a year lost between each of the rickety stations: Beulah Road, Ebensburg, Nant-y-glo; gather your luggage and move it towards the door. BIG BEND.

VII

O voyagers, with you
I have moved like a firefly over the waters;
with you I was spit
like a cherry seed from the puckered lips of the tunnel.
Come: let us join our hands,
dance
ring around the rosy, farmer in the dell
around this clucking locomotive. Come!
And out of the red cabooses huddled in the yards,
out of the engine cabs and roundhouses
will stream out silently to meet us
these others.
Come!

VIII

Out of the group at the station, no form detached itself
to meet him; the circle of their backs
was a wall against him. He waited
until the checkerboard lights of the train had shown
phantasmally along the shale of the cut and vanished.
He buttoned his coat and stumbled into the darkness,
the darkness proceeded along with him until
he picked it up and wrapped it about his shoulders,
bending his shoulders under the weight of the darkness,
he stumbled away with his burden of bushes and hills.

MALCOLM COWLEY

BOTTLE FOUND AT SEA*

Lost as I am by the edge of this profound lake in which is mirrored an unknown sky, shall I ever attain the linking of my existence with the human centuries whose faint trail seems scarcely to penetrate these regions? Even the sense of time is forgotten: whether I go toward yesterday or tomorrow, there is no way of knowing. And these words suggest nothing more, since it is impossible to tell whether the ages have been arrested forever or whether their flight has been hastened with the uniformly accelerated rapidity of a body approaching the sun. If only I had a watch with me to end this uncertainty. A diffuse light reigns eternally over this world and the sun that is of space as well as of time has deserted this immutable firmament. The lovely liquid expanse which composes my horizon rounds out toward the west and receives at the northwest a stream that flows from the north. As far as I can ascertain with the aid of my compass, its direction seems to be north-northeast by south-southwest. But how to measure its extent? I have made the circumference of the lake several times without arriving at even the haziest idea as to the year or minute of the length of the voyage. At first glance I had estimated the circumference to be a hundred miles. Later conjectures brought this figure up from a hundred to a hundred and fifty or a hundred and sixty miles. The actual span must be somewhere between these two numbers. Nor can the time that I place at the disposal of this investigation serve as a yard-stick: it comprises anything from a few sparse thoughts to a desert of ennui and vexation. The beatings of my pulse inform me no better, their irregularities born no doubt of the helplessness in which I find myself to appraise equivalents amid such astounding phenomena. The vegetation in its development follows no habitual or logical order of growth. There are trees here which grow downward, flowers that give forth leaves, buds that the wind carries off to make a carpet for me.

* Fragment from *Telamaque*, a novel to be published this spring. Translated from the French by Will Bray.

Certain plants remain invariable; others seem as ephemeral as my regard. Suddenly I feel myself ageing as I lift my eyelids. I should certainly make a poor hour-glass.

How I could have blundered about in time; I still wonder at this. I had accepted with real pleasure an invitation to go to Normandy and stay at the villa of a friend, Celeste P . . . married recently. Paris was thinning out, and the thought of spending a few days by the sea-shore where the air was so pure and refreshing with the nip of salt, was by no means unpleasant to me. It had been a superb day. The sun brimmed over in the fields. The dust invaded the railroad coaches, but nearing the sea we scented its delicious tang and it went right to our hearts. Getting off the train, I looked about me and saw that the sky was sky-blue. Celeste advanced toward me with her hand outstretched. Suddenly a fit of abstraction seized me, I thought of other things: once you have thought of other things, you are done for. Impossible to get back to the point of departure, and following the thread I reached some desert region at some indetermined epoch of the universe. At first I did not understand what was happening to me. I said to myself: „This cannot last". Now I do not even know whether it does last.

I have come to believe that in the temporal impasse into which I have strayed there is no soul that lives. Only a companion in misfortune could help me to regain life. Together we could reconstitute time. Simply a matter of comparison. Alone, I lose grip on myself in wrestling with my identity: if I remained the same from one minute to another how could I experience the transformation announced by this movement of the clock-hand? I end by losing all track of the continuity of my thought. For in the most general sense all is logical to me in solitude, and, writing as I am for chance salvagers, for blind savages, or for the deaf tides that carry my bottle, I can scarcely trust that the language I use will ever be understood by any man other than myself. Why, it is impossible for me to read it over: I am only intelligible to myself in flashes. My sheet of paper all at once becomes perfectly blank

again, or covered with ideas I have never had. The words themselves come invested in strange masks, or bare and different from each other. Bursted balloons. Pastimes, pleasures, leisure, salt of life, all seem strange customs, rites devised to hasten death along. Fire is what I find most mysterious of all. The novel I kept in my pocket during the entire journey has remained there and I reassemble in it my only memories of human life. Preposterous existence bounded only by the most elementary of questions. I take, for instance, from my book, the character called George, hotelkeeper. How the emblems of all the trades balance themselves unhappily in the blue city of the vision. This horrible limitation, the branch of holly which the man fixed above his door one morning condemned him to be nothing but an innkeeper for all eternity. Is it not true that in books sudden illuminations flash between the conventional characters one longs to resemble? The choice between two destinies is tragically lost in the disordered movements of the heart. A very beautiful woman, two or three singular exaltations, a moment of perfect happiness, the entire life of a citizen of the world reduces itself to a few metaphors more wretched and vulgar than a carpenter's shop: the split up wood hardly arouses any enthusiasm. Through staring into space for a long time there grows in my breast the image of the red and blue infinite in which life pulses at a given speed. Adjust yourself any way you please: to regard the universe, or to interrogate your heart; it cannot be done without fatigue. All ends with a red lamp balanced against the wind, and later, the horses having delivered the parcel, trotting briskly along the pavement of the suburbs.

Sun of cries without reason, mad plants, the earth flees we know not where and we press the tablets of physical law against our vest-pockets with little commendatory smiles. With what great ingenuity we bind for ourselves with ribbon-formulae a bouquet of marguerites and of roses, the functions of space and time yielding indulgently to our will! In the meantime I am quite beautifully lost in duration, and my movements are restricted from just here to there. But I feel more and more, I almost said with every day, the

elements of my consciousness rotting and melting. I have only to give utterance to a few more of such notions and it is all over with my chances of getting back to the land of clocks. And yet, it is the gradual disintegration of my personality that I have the strongest misgivings about. Since I am alone I cannot go mad. The sponges of silence, the crystals of vacuum, where was I amongst them? I hurry on, bicyclist lost after the departure of the rear wheel, maintaining myself miraculously by one perpetual revolution. *Equilibrium* denotes nothing but unstable position, or habitual difficulty, if you will. Yes, crawling fear has its little day of terror. I choke now and then through forgetting to breathe at regular intervals. Sensuousness in this brothel-world! Best not to think of it. The geometrical progression of lust is not conceived as apart from all continuity. The four operations, very nice to talk about. Fly in sticky-paper, inkwell of clouds, who will give me back the fancy-cake with an Eiffel Tower relief, the City of Light, as it is called.

LOUIS ARAGON

PERIPATETICS

1

Do not sway thus from side to side thin young woman with one breast the left, crushing a book against this. I, utterly curious shall walk behind thee monster. It will, doubtless, take many quibbling miles before I have gulped thee, whole, into my system. Let us walk a little further and all will be very simple.

2

If I, you, the mussels, the oysters, the ham, the lobster, the artichoke, should all yawn and agree that it were time to get up and march across the tables form a procession and crawl thoughtfully into the street order sunlight a flourish an electric baton a zebra in advance an elephant supporting the rear — would they then disagree with us? would they be willing to consider another point of view and lay it before us reasonably?

3

Returning at evening to my dear door in the courtyard my knees trembling with exhaustion, here where no flowers have begun burgeoning, nothing commenced clasping my senses (I am about yearning for the brown old streets again with the high walls I have just left: the Street of the Honest Burgher, the Street of the Wooden Sword, the Street of the Four Daugthers as well as that of the Four Winds where I promenaded modifying my conceptions to conform with just and mild skepticisms), I am now burning to test my knowledge of the way in their evening aspect (could the method fail?) when the peaceful nunneries of the grilled windows would pose new and arresting riddles; thence to return to my door with my pausing and reflective key to consider it all again and turn or turn the key.

4*

I shall not grow bald; whatsoever,
I shall hang on to my hair by the hair.

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

* Dedicated to G. B. M.

APOLLINAIRE: OR LET US BE TROUBADOURS

One of the first illusions to be rejected upon contact with European letters in the flesh is that the present generation consists of exthausted and disenchanted young men. Nothing could have been more unfounded. There is far more danger, I am told, of the present American generation exhausting itself in attempting to dent the stupidity of its art-patrons, its censors, its inarticulate loosebrained prophets.

They are not exhausted, these young men who have survived 1914—1918. Witness the excellent morale of the writers of the *avant-garde* in France who, in isolation from the rest of their countrymen, have completely forgotten the war. Talented, extravagant, intolerant, fun-loving, these young writers whether of *Dada* affiliations or not have broken with the direct line of French literature. The fifty or sixty crowned poets of the pre-war era from Mallarmé to Paul Fort, all of whom de Gourmont treats with such encyclopaedic precision, and some of whom Amy Lowell introduced belatedly and inaccurately to the American public, — these have all been immolated. There is a brisk inclination to forget the silver age of twenty years or so preceding the war which was dominated by such sterile traditions as those of de Regnier, Barrès, Moréas, Anatole France, de Gourmont.

In the main line from the tendencies of yesterday falls the group dominated by André Gide and associated with the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise*. In its most characteristic contributors, André Salmon, Jean Giraudoux, Paul Morand, there is a certain penchant for mockery, a certain cleverness at the comedy of manners. But in none of these writers has there been a clean break with the artistic conceptions of the foregoing era. Inasmuch as the majority of French writers are still reiterating the a little frozen beauties of the Symbolists or the vers-libre universitaire of Laforgue there is very little to hope for. One meets with a great many names in the throng of reviews and books published and commented upon every day. They are

blurred with indistinctness in the recollection of them. They scarcely ruffle the surface. The similarity of one personality to another is significant, their divergences unimportant.

The age has been at the mercy of the small talents and the war has scarcely sifted them into big or little ones. What is worse, it has even placed false stress on the mysticism of Peguy and Claudel, or shifted attention to the raucous insincere „modernism" of Jean Cocteau. This last gentleman, a Maecenas of the arts, an idol of the boulevards, a *rastoquere*, whose poetry has the taste of bran and leaves a perfect blank in the brain, — this person has been presented by indiscriminate American interpreters as the last word . . . of Paris.

In the turbulent „advance guard" of letters there is, however, something to be reckoned with. One meets an unexpected sincerity, a desperate willingness to go to any lengths of violence in opposing the old regime. The young men who operated *„Littérature"* for two years, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, André Breton are certainly youthful as individuals and as a group or „movement" (in this nation of groups) and what they have done has not altogether assumed permanent value. But one takes much hope from their quick intelligence, their sensibility, their vigorous and fun-loving disposition. They are inventive to an extreme degree and are utterly without blague or snobbery. They are bent frankly on unbounded adventures and experiments with modern phenomena. They have been stimulated by Rimbaud and Lautréamont, who demonstrated, for instance, that although nature had always been painted as a static landscape in literature it could be rendered in subjective motion or in any of a thousand states.

The Apollinaire strain is in these writers. One of the last things that Guillaume Apollinaire wrote concerned the field which was left to the poets of this age. Apollinaire, arch-intransigeant and forerunner of almost everything of importance, I fear, that will take place in the literature of the next generation, urged the poets of this time to be at least as daring as the mechanical wizards who exploited the airplane, wireless telegraphy, chemistry, the submarine, the cinema, the phonograph,

what-not. The innovations of the past generation, have been astounding. The recent conquests of man over nature have in many cases realized the fables of ancient times. It is for the modern poet to create the myths and fables which are to be realized in succeeding ages.

„Is there nothing new under the sun?" asks Apollinaire. „Nothing — for the sun, perhaps. But for man — everything!" The poet is to stop at nothing in his quest for novelty of shape and material; he is to take advantage of the possibilities for infinite combinations, the new equipment afforded by the cinema, phonograph, dictaphone, airplane, wireless. What he creates out of these new conditions, these new instruments, or the re-percussions which these things have had on our life, will be the material the folk-elements, if you will, of the myths and fables for the future.

Touching definitely on the form or technique of poetry Apollinaire regards vers libre as only a fraction of the possible contributions to the media of poetry. There is an infinite amount of discovery to be made, he suggests, with alliteration, with assonance, with typographical arrangements such as give new visual and auditory sensations to the reader.

Has anything more immediate been offered with reference to the ways and means of modern art than these enunciations of Apollinaire? He goes even farther than the suggestions I have quoted. There is the forecast of possibly some poet or super-artist, who like a modern orchestra conductor will have at his baton a hundred or a thousand different instruments, or sciences, or mechanisms. This enormous army of symphony (as I have always dreamed it, at least) would fill a prodigious amphitheatre, against which the Grosses Schauspielhaus of Berlin would shrink in the comparison. The audience of course would be one man, on the stage . . .

We shall not discuss these bewildering possibilities for the moment. It suffices that proceeding with the conception of a modern folk-lore we are justified in traversing all the ramifications of modern man, all the far flung discordant exigencies of the present spectacle, whether they be in an office building of New York,

in the grand hall of the Aquitania on the Atlantic, or in an airplane volplaning felicitously down on Warsaw.

The literature of Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara is an exhilarating record. Tzara's poems are as naturally expressive of the beauty of this age as Herrick's are of the 17th Century. With an utterly simple and unaffected touch they employ all the instruments of the time, the streetcar, the bill-poster, the automobile, the incandescent light, etc. The poems are not modern because they indicate: „I was riding in the tramway" (instead of a diligence), but because the tramway gets into the very rhythm, form and texture of the poems.

In the prose of Louis Aragon there is the speed and vividness of the motion picture, a constant and uproarious dialectic, and a volume and richness that is quite distinguished after so much thin and lucid French prose. The humor is not of human foibles so much as of smoothly functioning swiftly moving modern devices. The influences of the up-to-date detective and the American cinema are strongly evident. There are marvelous American films whose characters, out of all the sincerity of the director's heart, make the most preposterous, imbecilic and imaginative gestures. There is much of this terrifying beauty in Aragon's stories.

Les Champs Magnétiques, which André Breton and Philippe Soupault wrote in collaboration is another commanding book of prose. It rejects plot as completely as Joyce's *Ulysses* does, but goes even farther in disavowing even such a precise and inchoate verisimilitude as Joyce employs. The book achieves an upheaval of methods. Take a single sentence or a paragraph and it is, alone, rich-and-beautiful, but means nothing without its context. For the writers instead of attempting to express human drama by definite words or phrases indicating so many incidents or details, work for an effect of growth in their theme by a large continued rhythm. The prose changes its blend and intensity of light, spatters its broken tracts of conversation or cogitation, gathering a large momentum through the succession of chapters rather than sentences. This is simply another case of literature coming abreast of modern painting or sculpture or music.

The poems of Paul Eluard in *Exemples*, with their bright hardness and their artfully chosen typographical appearances suggest curious and tortured movements a little beyond the reverberations of the words. They are dominated by a piercing humor which is however quite unlike Aragon's or Jarry's.

The conviction strengthens here and there among the extreme young who are jealous of their liberty that the modern folk-lore of which Apollinaire spoke is taking shape. These young writers are of considerable ingenuity and charm. Their work seems clean; they are not tangled up in messy Parnassian paraphernalia; they do not fumble with the old clichés. These observations are the basis for my initial assertion that France is not exhausted. Nor is Europe, in that case. One feels curiously as if a great developing movement, a momentous front-drive were getting under way.

On the other hand, the conviction comes that Americans need play no subservient part in this movement. It is no occasion for aping European or Parisian tendencies. Quite the reverse, Europe is being Americanized. American institutions, inventions, the very local conditions of the United States are being duplicated, are being „put over" daily in Europe. One has only to visit Berlin, for instance, in 1922 to witness this phenomenon. The complexion of the life of the United States has been transformed so rapidly and so daringly that its writers and artists are rendered a strategic advantage. They need only react faithfully and imaginatively to the brilliant minutiae of her daily existence in the big cities, in the great industrial regions, athwart her marvelous and young mechanical forces.

WILL BRAY

instant note brother

nothing rises nothing descends
no horizontal movement
he arises
nothing stirs neither being nor non —
being nor the idea nor the prisoner
chained nor the tramway
he hears nothing other than himself
understands nothing other than the
chairs the stone the cold the water . . .
knows to pass through solid
matter
having no more need of eyes he
throws them away in the street
last burst of blood in the
dusk
last flourish
he tears out his tongue — flame
transfixed by a star
quieted
autumn dead like a leaf
of red palm

and reabsorbs that which he denied
and dissolves the project in the other
hemisphere second season of
existence
as the nails and the hairs
cross and return

TRISTAN TZARA

Translated from the French by Will Bray

A BOW TO THE ADVENTUROUS

What is the attitude of the critic toward the range of subject matter suitable for literature? What is the attitude of other literary artists toward the same?

Isidore Ducasse does not directly raise these questions in the curious preface to his lost *Poésies*, but they constitute the chief protuberances in my reflections upon his emphatic assertions. Here was a youth, born in 1850 and dead in 1870, author of the *Chants de Maldoror*, a legend about himself, and *Poésies*, who based his violent reaction against the poetry of his century purely upon its subject matter. „Je remplace la mélancolie par le courage, le doute par la certitude, le désespoir par l'espoir, la méchaneté par le bien, les plaintes par le devoir, le scepticisme par la foi, les sophismes par la froideur du calme et l'orgueil par la modestie." With a dauntless courage, he denounces Chateaubriand, Sénancourt, Jean-Jaques Rousseau, Anne Radcliffe, Edgar Allan Poe, Mathurin, Gautier, Leconte, Goethe. Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, Lermontoff, Victor Hugo, Mickiewicz, de Musset, Byron, Baudelaire and Flaubert. „Grands-Têtes-Molles," he dubs them. „Si vous êtes malheureux, il ne faut pas le dire au lecteur. Gardez cela pour vous." There is no discussion of the manner in which these writers employed their subject matter nor of the esthetic states they may produce. They chose subject matter the temperament of Ducasse detested. He erected his prejudices into general dogmatisms and declared that, therefore, their poetry would not endure. Lately, the Dadaists, partly through some affinity with his views on subject matter, have hoisted Ducasse from his obscurity.

The case of Ducasse gives, I think, a frequent answer to our second question. A poet or a novelist of specialized gifts seeks for subject matter which will work like an explosive in him. Much leaves him cold, but here and there he finds materials which heat him into expression. Sorrow forces one poet to tearful expression, praise of a beneficent god another to joyful affirmatives; that which a naturalistic novelist leaves out fires an idealistic narrator. Each, if he

knows what he is about, cultivates jealously his own propensities: each narrows the field to his own temperament and then digs as deeply as he can: each, unless he happens also to be a critic, is tempted to say that the subject matter which appeals to him is the best and even the only subject matter for the art he practices. We cannot quarrel with him.

But the answer to the first question is the reverse of this. The critic works after the fact. The catholic spirit, which has surveyed the staggering diversity of literature vertically through the ages and horizontally across the nations, which has noted the quality of surprize which attaches to esthetic production, which is in touch with the astonishing experiments of modern writers, which has experienced good states of mind from absolutely contradictory subject matter, can make only one answer. The range of subject matter suitable for literature is unlimited. In art as in love, so de Gourmont said, everything is possible. To put restrictions on the range of subject matter is to be guilty of provincialism both of time and of place.

Being human, the critic has his prejudices, of course. I, for example, am more interested by the psychological hesitations of the characters in a Henry James novel than I am by the slow thinking of the hill-folk in Knut Hamsum's *Growth of the Soil.* But that does not prevent the perception that Hamsum has fitted his diction to his dynamic realities, set his effects into relief and balance, and otherwise forced his rude marerials into a significant esthetic organization. From that I can extract enjoyment although in a more moderate degree than if I had been of a temperament more responsive to his subject matter. The primary task of a critic is to make allowances for his prejudices, to examine the relation between a writer and his dynamic reality (subject matter), and to ascertain the quality of the state of mind induced by the precipitate of this relationship. Catholicity may be a vice for a poet or fiction writer: it is always a virtue for the critic.

One poem of this number, *In A Café* by the precocious Will Bray, serves admirably to knot this discussion into an example. Although the Bible refers

to the bodily necessity he has so cleverly understated and Rabelais, Cervantes, Mark Twain (in „1601"), Huysmans and Apollinaire have made varying use of it, Bray invades subject matter that most people and most poets would condemn as unsuitable for literature. Yet Bray saw a certain humorous significance in the occasion which he conveys to us by rhythms, inventiveness and adroit evasions. We can perceive his loyalty to his stimulus, note the manner in which this loyalty has been made concrete, and experience an esthetic satisfaction from the solution of his problem.

In sum, criticism says to the other arts: Use any subject you wish. My concern is in the state of mind you create with it.

Another poem printed here, that by Tristan Tzara, will assist in developing this conclusion. (I do not, at present, vouch for the bulk of Tzara's activities but he has written several indubitable poems.) In this poem, Tzara contrives an abstract* organization. He departs altogether from conventional coherent intelligible subject material and gives us instead a controlled series of physical sensations. The effect is as unalloyed with intellectual and extra-esthetic reactions as those of music or cubist painting. Yet it cannot be defined in terms of musical or painting criticism nor very well by literary criticism since that is lamentably weak in its own esthetic vocabulary. Tzara's word arrangement approaches mathematics. (There is some reason for believing that the ecstasy arising from the solving of a complicated mathematical problem is very much akin to the esthetic emotion.) What he does here is, by means of words, to make a pattern of sharp arrest, dead calm, rising motion, developed calm, progress, spreading out, contraction and final collapse that leaves us physically satisfied. And emotionally satisfied. His is an abstractness as devoid of idea-emotions as music or painting can be but still belonging very definitely to words.

Satisfying as this is, it nevertheless causes speculation upon the depth, solidity and interior organization of

* Abstract, like romantic and realistic, is an indicative finger for certain readily perceived phenomena, but not a precise defining term.

writing. It brings us to a consideration of the esthetic power of a writer's material. The writer's material? Is it words filed as clean of all their connotations and ideational meanings as a curve or a spread of color is? Or is it precisely those connotations and meanings, those idea-emotions, that are the writer's material? The sign or the things for which the sign stands? Tzara is headed towards a sign esthetic. His poetry is a challenge to further research in the esthetic nature of words. My tentative belief, however, is that there are very restricted walls for an art based on signs and that the proper materials are those things which they symbolize. Abstract painting does all the essential things that representative painting, if it is of value, does. Both are good for the same reason. But abstract literature, to date, falls short of representative literature because it has not yet conquered a literary third dimension, cannot expand very far into an interior organization. That is, I conceive the psychological, social, idea-emotional, interpretative, etc., values of an organized piece of writing to be the only means a novelist, let us say, has to give a feeling of documentary solidity. They can be detached from his design, but, if he uses them as an artist, they serve to weight and energize his scheme. Let us note, then, that there are certain grandly serious elements of life and certain very trivial constituents. This means that the power of subject matter varies and leads to another tentative conclusion. The more documentary solidity a writer can give his work provided he can control surfaces proportioned to this interior development, the deeper and fuller response he can create.

With more certainty it may be said that there is a shifting importance attached to the multitudinous subjects which writers use and that there come periods when even the grandly serious things are of less importance for literary production than the minor facets of life. This is, in part, due to the operation of a law of fatigue upon esthetic emotion. Certain subject matter, let us say doubt, melancholy, speculation upon insolubles, exploited again and again in an era, gradually loses its potency and calls forth weaker and weaker replies. It is necessary to turn to other materials, courage and

certitude, minor moods perhaps, to evoke fresh strong responses. These assume for a time greater potency than their mighty predecessors. The literary history of France from 1830 to 1922 is replete with examples of reactions of this sort, the last being the present brilliant activities of Messieurs Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Soupault, et al. The exhaustion of certain literary forms, as, for instance, the Flaubertian novel-form seems to be exhausted today also shifts the importance of subject matter.

Experiment and discovery of new methods can often be conducted better if what the writer has to say is not so overwhelmingly urgent that he must say it at all cost. The presentation rather than the matter must be his urgency and his attention is more efficiently spent upon that if it is less distracted by the subject matter. This reduces to the simple statement: in some periods what a writer says is of supreme importance to the esthetic emotion, in others the evasion of the grandly serious is the most provocative.

* * *

Secession exists for those writers who are preoccupied with researches for new forms. It hopes that there is ready for it an American public which has advanced beyond the fiction and poetry of Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson and the criticism of Paul Rosenfeld and Louis Untermeyer.

Interested readers may look up an important origin and a general program for *Secession* in an essay by Malcolm Cowley entitled „*This Youngest Generation*," N. Y. Evening Post *Literary Review*, oct. 18, 1921.

G. B. M.

UNPUBLISHED FRAGMENT FROM MR. AA THE ANTIPHILOSOPHER

When the eyes transcend their orbit the cravat of the branches strangles the English foliage dressed in high silk hat white gloves and patent leather slippers of ardent chlorophyl. What said my friend you do not believe in the existence of parallels even though they prolong and renew themselves. The finale of symphony is hard the music cannot end without cutting up the fragments of beauty into yet smaller pieces and beginning over again. It is too bad said he again we shall never know whether it is the wind that bends the blade of grass or the blade of grass that bends the wind. Put the grass in some place where there is no wind — i believe in neither common sense nor paradox. My plane has no wind no grass it has no place it has no flies. Live without reaction without moods without false tempests. My plane loves ennui and the uncertain colors and the bisexual paths my plane resembles all other planes and its men all other men good God there is no happiness anywhere life passes as it passes the only happiness is to know ennui the poet-insects shut themselves up in their towers of chocolate on the mountain of Zarathustra they are the geniuses who with their secretaries go into town twice a day to telephone to the printer and measure by the scale of animal pride the results of their compromises. My dear Tzara let us have done with the purity and the impurity of the mind and the Parisian temperament the Academy and Spain as well as all the Spanish dead living anarchists or Indians indeed all such flippancies cold and cynical as exist or do not exist in coarse brains functioning like stomachs. The amassing brain — bah 'tis nothing but a crab that stayed behind in the chowder and made believe he was an emperor. It was a brave chowder with brass music and travel-pictures.

How do you do what already very well rescussitate in the wind no matter where how are you says my friend i am very well thank you do you want a light he says the ruffled bird might pass as an

eyebrow for the dusk expiring of so much beautiful music said he how are you what already i am very well thank you rescussitate in the wind anywhere how are you says my friend i am very well do you want a light says he.

TRISTAN TZARA

Translated from the French by Will Bray

IN A CAFÉ

He — You are a sweet girl
and I shall throw you into the river
you are a sweet girl
and I shall buy you narcissi
you are a sweet girl
and I shall give you wormwood
you are a sweet girl
and I shall chew your ear
you are a sweet girl
and I shall leave you for a moment
She — I am going to leave *you* for a moment
He — — I am going to leave *You* for a moment
leave YOU
leave YOU
a moment
a moment
oh well
oh!

WILL BRAY

EXPOSÉ No. 1

The *Dial* is, I suppose, generally considered to be America's leading magazine of literary expression. One critic has even called it the recognized organ of the young generation! True, there is not much competition for these honors, and the career of the *Little Review* has been sufficiently obscure for the *réclame* brought by size, money, circulation and famous names to overshadow it in public esteem. What, then, is our „leader" like?

It boasts: „We have freed ourselves from commercialism and manifestos, from schoolmen and little schools, from a little nationalism and a snobbish cosmopolitanism". That is, it has freed itself from a fixed point for judging, the absence of which for morality Pascal found so lamentable, but which happily exists for art. It has liberated itself from a definite direction. It feels no obligation to homogeneity. Naturally, its chief effect is one of diffuseness. It is late Victorian, Yellow Book, philosophic, naturalistic, professorial, dadaistic, traditional, experimental, wise, silly, international and nationalistically concerned in a developing literature. It prints Anatole France, Thomas Hardy, Santayana, Yeats, Beerbohm, Sherwood Anderson, Pierre Loving (!), professorial articles on German literature and Thomas Moore, Kenneth Burke, E. E. Cummings, James Oppenheim, Mina Loy, Ezra Pound, Jean Cocteau, D. H. Lawrence and an article on *Higher Education in China!* A stringent catholicity is admirable, but where is the reconciliation here? With this array of irreconcilables, it is no wonder a copy of the *Dial* gives the impression of splitting apart in one's hand.

As an intellectual cable across the Atlantic, the *Dial* has informed America that Remy de Gourmont has lived and died. The news of Guillaume Apollinaire is still * untransmitted.

It features a wallowing ox of a stylist who retails each month acres of vague impressionistic excrement on music, painting, and books. Still, his uncouth attempts

* February, 1922.

at new sentence rhythms, word coinage, and telling inversions give more hilarity than pain. But this soft place next to Marianne Moore!

The final seal has been stamped by the announcement that the 1921 Dial Award has been bestowed upon Sherwood Anderson. It was stated that „the award will go to a young American writer, one of our contributors, in recognition of his service to American letters . . . to be given annually to one who has already accomplished a service, yet has not completed his work . . . intended for encouragement and opportunity" for leisure, I infer. It went to a man forty-five years old and by no means in a seriously impecunious position. Inasmuch as the royalties from six books and frequent payments from several magazines eager for his work have, of late years, enabled him to support a family, devote all his time to writing, and take a summer's trip to Europe. An established writer, in short. The approach to articulateness of this author I have traced in detail in an essay now floating around somewhere in America. Let me extract a few points without supporting them again.

1. The impulse which produced *Windy Mac Pherson's Son* and *Marching Men* was thin. Anderson, in Brentano's trade paper, spring of 1921, declares they were written from an emulative desire worked up by reading other novels. 2. I agree with his preface statement to *Mid-American Chants* that he can do nothing as yet „but mutter and feel our way toward the promise of song". 3. The key-sentence to *Winesburg, Ohio* is „One shudders at the meaninglessness of life while at the same instant and if the people of the town are his people, one loves life so intensely that tears come into the eyes". This translates into „I have nothing to oppose to the meaninglessness of life but a sentimental attachment for my fellow townsmen". 4. Anderson has no control of diction, not even the elementary management of sentence mechanics that syntax can give. There are many examples. Witness one from *Poor White*. „Standing on a high cliff and with a grove of trees at his back, the stars seemed to have all gathered in the eastern sky". 5. Anderson's formula for writing is a psychological, not an esthetic one. *Vide* Brentano's trade paper, spring of 1921. 6. He correctly regrets

in the *Triumph of the Egg*, „I have a wonderful story to tell, but I know no way to tell it", since his diction, construction, characters, ideas, and emotions are in a most hopeless sprawl. He is, literally, a monotonous pilgrim on the road from nowhere into nothing. In everything in writing that the generation under twenty-five values, he is incomplete.

„ . . . what makes us understand the rack and the wheel is the assurance from our friends that if we dropped everything modern we should have a great magazine. Possibly they are right. We will not say that in that case we should have a great dead magazine; but we are certain that we should be doing half our job and no more". — The *Dial*. The *Dial* condescends to include certain young writers, some of whom are both very promising and desperately impecunious. Motives of safety, shall we say since its editors have repudiated commercialism, lead it to insulate them by the cooling remains of pre-war literature and to assign its award to a man with an influential public.

It would be less compromising to go one way or the other. Stay on dry land like the *Atlantic Monthly* or leap headfirst into the contemporary stream. *If you wish a good swim, take off your life-belt!*

I should not like to see the *Dial* annihilated, but I should enjoy seeing its pretences abandoned. Vulgarization is a legitimate business. Some large American publisher might well bring out the *Dial* as Émile Paul Frères publishes *Les Écrits Nouveaux*. That would be a frank undertaking.

The existence of this *Yale-Review*-in-a-Harvard-blazer is one of the bitter necessities calling for *Secession*.

G. B. M.

AN OLD SONG TO NEW MUSIC

The Director pledges his energies for at least two years to the continuance of *Secession*. Beyond a two year span, observation shows, the vitality of most reviews is lowered and their contribution, accomplished, becomes repetitious and unnecessary. *Secession* will take care to avoid moribundity.

Secession is taking advantage of low printing costs in the Central Powers. This means that, whereas most magazines of the arts in America must appeal for thousands of dollars in order to attain to any size or distribution, *Secession* can equal them by the expenditure of a few hundreds.

This fact affords the sophisticated, regardless of the size of the bank accounts in their names, an unusual opportunity to resume the honored role of literary patron — at present neglected by a leisure class without the knowledge of enjoying their leisure.

By the gift of only five dollars (more, if you like) towards the expenses of each of six successive numbers, you may become a Patron of *Secession*. Patronage gifts are payable upon notice from the Treasurer a short time in advance of the publication of each number. Patrons receive two subscriptions, invitations to *Secession* soirées, and whatever other special privileges we can give them. A sufficient amount of patronage will produce a larger, more handsome *Secession*, printed ten times a year. It will enable us to make moderate payment for manuscripts.

Enthusiasts are invited to address Peter K. Hurwitz, Treasurer, 1361 — 46 Street, Brooklyn, New York.

Je ne permets à personne, pas même à Elohim de douter de ma sincérité.

Isidore Ducasse
(Comte De Lautrémont)

Printed by Julius Lichtner, Vienna VIII.